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ABSTRACT

The City of London Polytechnic offers a number of part-time courses leading to qualifications awarded by professional associations and similar examining bodies. The majority of the courses are taught by the departments of accounting and finance, banking and insurance, transport studies, and marketing. There are also courses in biological sciences, civil aviation, marine engineering, maritime studies, and silversmithing and jewellery. A recent conference on library use by part-time students stressed the heterogeneous nature of part-time students and underlined the importance of the library's sensitivity to their information needs. To assess the needs of this group and assist in the provision of appropriate library facilities, questionnaires were distributed to 22 professional associations and similar examining bodies to ascertain their views on the role of the library in courses leading to their examinations. This document reports the responses from 18 (82%) of the associations. Topics covered include reading lists, the importance of course reading, the importance of college library facilities, mention of library facilities in regulations and syllabuses, textbooks, the importance of keeping up-to-date, project work, proficiency in finding information, computerized bibliographic files and databases, and changes in syllabi. The library use questionnaire and a list of the professional associations and other organizations that responded are appended. (THC)

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LIBRARY RESEARCH DIGEST

No. 10

THE LIBRARY NEEDS OF PART-TIME STUDENTS PREPARING FOR PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS

by

Pauline Blagden

1984

LLRS Publications,
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The City of London Polytechnic runs a number of part-time courses leading to qualifications awarded by professional associations and similar examining bodies. These are listed in Appendix 2. The majority of courses are based at Moorgate and fall under the auspices of the following departments: Accounting and Finance, Banking and Insurance, Transport Studies and Marketing. There are also courses in biological sciences, civil aviation studies, marine engineering, maritime studies and silversmithing and jewellery which are based at other sites. Modes of attendance vary, some courses being part-time day, others part-time evening or part-time day and evening. While some courses, like the City and Guilds Certificates, are non-advanced, others are the equivalent of degree level, such as the Financial Studies Diploma of the Institute of Bankers. Appendix 2 also gives student numbers on individual courses. Altogether on 1st November 1983 over 5,000 students were enrolled at the City of London Polytechnic on courses preparing for the examinations of professional associations.

1.2. A recent conference on library use by part-time students (City of London Polytechnic, Library and Learning Resources Service 1983) has stressed the heterogeneous nature of part-time students and underlined the importance of the Library's sensitivity to their particular needs. In order to help assess the needs of this large group of part-time students and assist in the provision of the most appropriate library facilities for them, it was considered useful to ascertain the views of professional associations about the role of libraries in their courses.

2. METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires (Appendix 1) were distributed to the 22 professional associations and similar examining bodies (Appendix 2) for whose examinations students are prepared at the City of London Polytechnic. A questionnaire was distributed for each course, but associations were asked to complete only one questionnaire if the same answers applied in all cases. Three weeks later, reminder letters and further copies of the questionnaire were distributed to those associations which had not replied.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Response Rate

Eighteen of the twenty-two associations replied, a response rate of 82%. Only three associations returned more than one questionnaire. Two of these felt that some answers differed depending on the level of the course and the third wished to note the existence of a reading list for one course and not for another.

3.2. The Importance of Course Reading

Reading is clearly considered to be important in order to complete courses successfully. Fifteen of the associations who responded regarded it as "of great importance" and three regarded it as "of some importance".

3.3. Reading Lists

3.3.1. The majority of associations (16 out of 18) said that there was a reading list for the course of which students should be aware. Twelve associations enclosed one or more reading lists with their reply. Four associations include reading lists in their "Regulations and Syllabuses", while eight publish them separately. The lists of seven associations are divided, for example into "Recommended Reading" and "Further Reading". Two provide alternative titles.

3.3.2. The amount of bibliographic information given varies considerably. The minimum provided is the title and the author's surname. On the other hand, five associations give fuller bibliographic details including the author's full name, the title, publisher and date of publication. Titles of journals and references to journal articles are sometimes included. Several associations emphasise the importance of using the latest edition of a book and of keeping up-to-date in general. (See Paragraph 3.7) The date of the reading list is generally clearly indicated, invariably so when it is included in the "Regulations and Syllabus". However, three are not dated.

3.4. The Importance of College Library Facilities

Generally, associations felt it was important for students to make use of the library facilities of the institutions where they are studying, although the "halo" effect cannot be discounted since the questionnaire came from a Polytechnic Library. Eight associations considered that it was "very important" for students to make use of such library facilities.

The Institute of Transport commented "without a strong Transport Section your students would find it very difficult to pass our examinations, and the continuance of the high level of facilities provided is absolutely vital". A further seven institutions considered the use of such library facilities to be "of some importance", one commenting that it depended on the quality of the employer's library. The Institute of Bankers in Scotland pointed out the problems of lack of space, saying "Because of overcrowding in your library, our students use the facilities of the Institute of Bankers in Lombard Street, but this is an informal arrangement which cannot be expected to continue indefinitely." Of the other three associations, two considered it to be "of no importance" for students to make use of library facilities at the institutiton where they are studying, while the third considered it to be "of some importance" for one course and "of no importance" for another. These three associations cover more practical subjects, two dealing with arts and crafts and the other with maritime studies.

3.5. Mention of Library Facilities in "Regulations and Syllabuses"

Slightly less than half (8 out of 18) of the associations who replied said that they mentioned libraries in their "Regulations and Syllabuses". Where mention of libraries is made, associations most commonly describe their own libraries; the subject coverage, opening hours, borrowing facilities available to students and so on. A few make more general comments about libraries and the importance of private study. The Institute of Bankers in Scotland recommends that six hours a week be allocated to private study "so that students can make full use of the library facilities". The Institute of Bankers recently included in its own journal an article on reading material for students, advising on what to read and how to obtain it. (Student reading material, 1983).

3.6. Textbooks

Fourteen associations said that they advise students to purchase some of the textbooks necessary for their course and four associations said that they do not. However only one association advises students to purchase all the necessary textbooks. The Institute of Marketing commented, "Familiarity with the 'set' books is vital but purchase of all is not always feasible."

The role of college lecturers in advising about book purchase is mentioned by a number of associations. The Association of Certified Accountants, which does not itself make recommendations about the purchase of textbooks, noted that this is "left to individual college lecturers." The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators states in the introduction to its "Examination Reading Lists" that "students are recommended to seek the advice of their teaching institutions as to their choice of reading before purchasing books."

3.7. The Importance of Keeping Up-to-date

Thirteen associations felt that it was "of great importance" for students to be up-to-date with new developments either in their subject field or which are relevant to it. One association felt that this depended on the level of the course, saying that, while it was "of little importance" for students taking the preliminary examination, it was "of great importance" for students on more advanced courses. Two associations pointed out that legislation passed less than six months before an examination is not examined upon, but nevertheless felt that it was in students' interests to be as up-to-date as possible with new developments. The importance of keeping up-to-date is sometimes drawn to students' attention on reading lists, The Chartered Institute of Transport notes at the end of a reading list, "It is essential that students keep themselves up-to-date with current legislation and judicial decisions." The Institute of Bankers warns students that, because of rapid changes and developments, some of the information contained in the various publications recommended may have become out-of-date. Students are advised to read relevant articles in newspapers and journals.

3.7.1. Means of Keeping Up-to-date

Associations were asked how important they rated four different activities in keeping up-to-date, namely reading newspapers, reading specialist journals, reading recent textbooks and reading recent monographs. Their responses are summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES IN KEEPING UP-TO-DATE

Activity	Courses for which this is of great importance		of some importance		of little importance		of no importance		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reading newspapers	15	(40)	14	(37)	3	(8)	6	(16)	0	(0)
Reading specialist journals	26	(68)	11	(29)	1	(3)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Reading recent textbooks	19	(50)	7	(18)	7	(18)	5	(13)	0	(0)
Reading recent monographs	9	(24)	11	(29)	9	(24)	6	(16)	3	(8)

Of these four means of keeping up-to-date, the use of specialist journals stands out as the one which the associations consider most important. For 97.3% of courses, reading specialist journals is considered to be of either "great importance" or "some importance". Newspapers and textbooks are also felt to play an important part, monographs rather less so. For the more practical subjects, namely yachting and arts and crafts , only specialist journals are felt to be "of great importance" or "of some importance" in keeping up-to-date.

3.8. Project Work

Only a third of the associations (6 out of 18) who responded said that their couses contained an element of project work. However, the Institute of Taxation commented, "But they students are expected to do plenty of written work practising answers. For this it is likely that some students will need library facilities." Associations whose courses do contain an element of project work were asked how likely it was that students would need to use library facilities in order to complete it successfully. They were asked to give a rating on a scale of 1 to 5, (1 being the most likely and 5 the least likely). The one association which thought it unlikely was referring to a practical subject, namely jewellery. The others thought it likely that students would need library facilities, three associations giving a rating of 1 on the scale, and two giving a rating of 2.

3.9. Proficiency in Finding Information

The majority of associations felt that proficiency in finding information was important for students, nine considering it to be "of great importance" and six considering it to be "of some importance". Only two associations considered this to be "of little importance". One felt it depended on the level of the course, greater proficiency being necessary for more advanced courses.

3.10. Computerised Bibliographic Files and Data Bases

Only two associations said that they expected students to be familiar with computerised bibliographic files and data bases. These associations cover the very different subject areas of biological sciences and transport. Fifteen associations said they did not expect such knowledge and one did not respond. Associations are nevertheless aware of technological developments. The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators commented, "No formal requirement but the answer is increasingly 'yes', especially in the UK." The Institute of Taxation said, "The Council of this Institute is aware that computerisation is likely to affect professional practice increasingly over the next few years. However, it is not envisaged that the examinations will be directly affected in the immediate future. It is possible that in a decade or more from now, familiarity with computerised bibliographic files and data bases will be essential."

3.11. Changes in the Syllabus

One association reported it planned to introduce new subjects, withdraw others and review most syllabuses completely. Apart from this no changes in syllabuses likely to affect levels of library use by students were noted.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. There is a broad consensus of view amongst professional associations about the importance of library facilities for students on their courses. Differences of emphasis do occur where courses are of a more practical nature (Paragraphs 3.4 and 3.8). Some associations feel that their more advanced courses make more demands on library facilities than their preliminary courses. (Paragraphs 3.7 and 3.9)

4.2. Course reading is regarded as important. (Paragraph 3.2) Most associations provide guidance on what to read; reading lists are the rule rather than the exception. (Paragraph 3.3) Some associations go further and offer more detailed advice on obtaining reading materials. (Paragraph 3.5) Other leave this to college lecturers. (Paragraph 3.6)

4.3. Libraries at the institution where students are studying are generally regarded by professional associations as one of a number of sources from which students may obtain reading materials. (Paragraph 3.4) Indeed, some have students who are studying independently and who would therefore have to turn to other sources. The use of associations' own libraries, employers' libraries where these exist and the purchase of some textbooks are all regarded as important. (Paragraphs 3.4, 3.5, 3.6)

4.4. The stress placed on current awareness has important implications for academic libraries. There is a strong emphasis (Paragraph 3.7) on keeping abreast of new developments in the subject area, and to do this successfully, students need access to a wide range of relevant and up-to-date materials, particularly specialist periodicals.

4.5. Although relatively few of their students have to undertake project work (Paragraph 3.8), professional associations do require them to become proficient in finding information. (Paragraph 3.9) Libraries have a vital educative role in this process, even more important as the need grows for students to be familiar with computerised bibliographic files and data bases. (Paragraph 3.10).

References

CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC, LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES SERVICE (1983). The part-time student in the Library: papers prepared for a conference held at the City of London Polytechnic April 15th and 16th 1982, edited by Philip Payne. London: City of London Polytechnic, Library and Learning Resources Service.

STUDENT reading material (1983) Banking World, (Sept.): pp 47-8

Pauline Blagden
Research Librarian

APPENDIX 1

CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC
LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES SERVICE

LIBRARY USE BY STUDENTS ON PART-TIME

COURSES LEADING TO

PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION .....

COURSE .....

NAME OF CONTACT .....
(Block letters please)

1. To what extent is it important to undertake course reading in order to complete this course successfully?

   Of great importance ☐

   Of some importance ☐

   Of little importance ☐

   Of no importance ☐

2. Is there a reading list for the course of which the students should be aware?

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

   If YES, please could you attach a copy.

3. How important is it for students to make use of library facilities at the institution at which they are studying to be successful in your examinations?

   Of great importance ☐

   Of some importance ☐

   Of little importance ☐

   Of no importance ☐

4. Do you mention the use of library facilities in your Regulations and Syllabuses or in other printed materials distributed to lecturers or students?

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

   If YES, what do you say?

5. Do you advise students to purchase any textbooks?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If YES, do you expect them to purchase all the textbooks necessary for the course?

Yes ☐

No ☐

6. To what extent is it important for students to be up-to-date with new developments in the subject field or which are relevant to it?

Of great importance ☐

Of some importance ☐

Of little importance ☐

Of no importance ☐

If you have ticked either of the first two boxes above, how important would you rate the following activities in keeping up-to-date?

	Of great importance	Of some importance	Of little importance	Of no importance
Reading newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading recent issues of specialist periodicals	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading recent textbooks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading recent monographs	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Are students expected to do any form of project work as part of the course?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If YES, how likely is it that students will need to use library facilities in order to complete it successfully? Please indicate on scale below.

Very likely 1 2 3 4 5 Unlikely

8. How important is it for students to be proficient in finding information in order to be able to complete the course successfully?

- Of great importance ☐
- Of some importance ☐
- Of little importance ☐
- Of no importance ☐

9. Would you expect students to be familiar with computerised bibliographic files and data bases in the subject area?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

10. Are there any changes to the syllabus being planned which may affect levels of use of library services by students on the course?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

If YES, please could you describe them.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please return the questionnaire to:

Pauline Blagden
Research Librarian
City of London Polytechnic
Calcutta House Precinct
Old Castle Street
London, E1 7NT

PB/MS - March 1984

APPENDIX 2

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER EXAMINING BODIES FOR WHOSE EXAMINATIONS THE CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC PREPARES STUDENTS

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	DEPARTMENT	COURSE(S)	PART-TIME STUDENTS NOS. AS AT 1.11.83.
Association of Certified Accountants	Accounting and Finance	Level 1 (Preliminary Examination) Level 2 (Professional Examination) Level 3 (Final Examination) Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance	97 221 38 78 434
Chartered Building Societies Institute	Accounting and Finance	Associateship	56
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy	Accounting and Finance	Certificate in Accountancy (P1 Equivalent) Diploma in Public Finance and Accountancy (P2 Equivalent) CIPFA Professional Examination 3	*50 *40 51 *141
Chartered Institute of Transport	Transport Studies	Qualifying and final examinations	10

*Estimate

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	DEPARTMENT	COURSE(S)	PART-TIME STUDENTS NOS. AS AT 1.11.83.
Chartered Insurance Institute	Banking and Insurance	Associateship Fellowship	1,463 187 1,650
Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Studies	Aviation Environment Flight Operations Airline Economics	17 2 1 20
City and Guilds of London Institute	Silversmithing, Jewellery and Allied Crafts	Craft Certificates/advanced craft certificates	26
Communication, Advertising and Marketing Education Foundation	Marketing	Certificate in Communication Studies	67
Department of Transport	Marine Engineering/ Maritime Studies	Certificate and endorsements	
Gemmological Association	Silversmithing, Jewellery and Allied Crafts	Diploma Post-diploma Certificate	29 26 55

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	DEPARTMENT	COURSE(S)	PART-TIME STUDENTS NOS. AS AT 1.11.83.
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants	Accounting and Finance	Foundation Professional	25 116 141
Institute of Marketing	Marketing	Certificate Professional	76 116 137
Institute of Packaging	Transport Studies	Membership	18
Institute of Taxation	Accounting and Finance	Associateship	71
Pensions Management Institute	Banking and Insurance	Associateship	64
Royal Yachting Association	Maritime Studies	Yachtmaster Offshore Ocean Competent Crew	 195 47 123 365
Stock Exchange	Accounting and Finance	Certificate	230

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	DEPARTMENT	COURSE(S)	PART-TIME STUDENTS NOS. AS AT 1.11.83.
Institute of Bankers	Banking and Insurance	Institute of Bankers Stage 2	1,340
		Trustee Stage 2	20
		Financial Studies Diploma	64
			1,424
Institute of Bankers in Scotland	Banking and Insurance	Associationship	27
Institute of Biology	Biological Sciences	Graduate Examination	19
Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators	Accounting and Finance	Profession Examination 1	
		2	
		3	
		4	220
Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers	Transport Studies	Associateship	182
		Fellowship	64
			246

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3. 'In-house' use of the Polytechnic Library (1982)

4. Part-time students: studies of their use of a Polytechnic Library (1983)

5. Monitoring the effectiveness of lending stock (1984)

6. Book selection and use (1984)

7. Analysis of reference enquiries at Central House Library (1984)

8. 'In-house' use of the Polytechnic Library by subject (1984)

9. Peak levels of seat occupancy (1984)

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